



DID You Know?

The following are things about RIF that not everyone knows. Some are options that management at local installations has the right to decide; others have already been decided by Air Force.

(a) USE OF VACANCIES

Within the Air Force all vacant positions will be used when determining RIF assignment rights. For RIF placement purposes, a vacancy is any established, authorized, funded position at the installation that is available to be filled; that is, one which does not have a formal hiring restriction (necessitated by funding limits, manpower reductions, etc.)

Air Force also offers vacancies in lieu of separation. This would apply to vacancies which remain unfilled after the reduction in force and which did not meet the definition of "available position" when determining assignment rights (i.e., an offer of a part-time position to a full time employee or offer a position below the three grade bump/retreat limit, offer of a temporary position).

(b) FULLY QUALIFIED IN RIF

To be qualified for assignment to an available position in RIF, including a vacancy, an employee must meet more than just basic eligibility. They must be Fully Qualified as defined by 5 CFR 351.702. This criterion normally goes beyond the qualifications we require for merit promotion consideration. As a result employees may not qualify for RIF assignment even though they were referred on a certificate for consideration to that position, or the same series at a higher grade.

An employee is fully qualified for assignment in RIF if they:

1. Meet OPM established standards and requirements for the position, including any minimum educational requirements, and any selective placement factors.
2. Are physically qualified, with reasonable accommodation where appropriate, to perform the duties of the position.
3. Meet any OPM approved special qualifying conditions for the position
4. Clearly demonstrate based on overall background, including recency of experience, the capability, adaptability, and special skills needed to satisfactorily perform the duties of the position without *undue interruption* to the organization.

(c) WAIVING QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS FOR VACANCIES

Waiving qualification requirements during a reduction in force applies only to the “formal” RIF process (when the employee has been released from his or her competitive level). When both the Civilian Personnel flight (CPF) and the appropriate management official agree, qualifications may be waived for assignment to a vacancy. Waiving qualification requirements, if exercised, should be done with caution. Qualifications should only be waived when there is strong evidence that the individual can perform the duties of the position but lacks all of the qualification requirements. Positive education requirements cannot be waived.

(d) MODIFICATION OF QUALIFICATIONS

In offering positions that are not a RIF assignment right (either in lieu of RIF separation or Pre RIF) you cannot “waive” qualifications but the Qualifications Standards Handbook allows the “modification” of standards. When both the Civilian Personnel flight (CPF) and the appropriate management official agree, qualifications may be “modified” for assignment to a vacancy. Modification of Qualifications should be done with caution. Qualifications should only be waived when there is strong evidence that the individual can perform the duties of the position but lacks all of the qualification requirements

(e) TIE-BREAKING PROCEDURES

Local installations need to establish tie-breaking procedures in the event two employees have identical retention standing. Most activities use the tie-breaking procedure (random based upon Social Security number) that is already programmed into AutoRIF.

Installations that do not elect to use AutoRIF’s tiebreaker must decide, and document, how ties will be broken. Remember this is an area that is negotiable with your local union.

(f) ASSIGNMENT RIGHTS FOR TENURE GROUP III EMPLOYEES

Term employees are competing employees in RIF (5 CFR 351.203) and are either separated or placed under reduction in force procedures if their positions are abolished prior to their appointment NTE date.

Within the Air Force, after release from their competitive level, tenure group III employees in the competitive service are considered for vacancies in lieu of RIF separations. This includes permanent vacancies if they are still available after all tenure group I and II have been considered. Since these are offers in lieu of separation the grade limits for assignment rights do not apply.

The Air Force does not provide tenure group III employees bumping rights in the second round reduction in force competition. There is also no authority (under OPM rules) for an agency to provide its group III employees with retreat rights.

(g) ASSIGNMENT RIGHTS FOR EXCEPTED SERVICE EMPLOYEES

There is no OPM or Air Force policy that provides excepted service employees any second round reduction in force competition consideration. All excepted service employees, regardless of tenure group, are subject to separation after release from their competitive level unless the installation or major command may establish a policy to provide for assignment rights in round two. At its option, the installation or command may provide its excepted service employees with both bumping and retreating rights.

Most installations do not offer bump and retreat rights to their released excepted service employees.

(h) TEMPORARY EMPLOYEES

A competitive service temporary employee (tenure group “0”) released from a competitive level in reduction in force does not have any assignment rights. Not even to another position in a different competitive level held by a temporary employee.

Temporary employees must be released before a competitive employee (tenure group I, II, or III) is released from the same competitive level. This does not mean that all temporary employees in all competitive levels must be terminated.

Management has the option as to whether they will retain or release temporary employees in those competitive levels not impacted while the agency is undergoing a reduction in force.

(i) TEMPORARY POSITIONS

Although a temporary position is not considered to be an “available” position for RIF assignment, you can make the offer of a vacant temporary position that will last at least 3 months if a competing employee has no other assignment rights and will otherwise be separated.

If used, as a reduction in force offer of assignment the position must be within the employee’s three-grade or grade interval range.

When an employee accepts a temporary position as a RIF offer of assignment the employee retains the same status and tenure.

Temporary positions vacancies below the three grades or grade interval range may only be offered in lieu of RIF separation. Employees can only be offered these positions by conversion (or reemployment). In these placements the employee must be converted to a tenure group “0” with a NTE date.

(j) REEMPLOYED ANNUITANTS

Reemployed annuitants serve at the will of the appointing officer (i.e., commander) and may be terminated at any time. At management's discretion, the reemployed annuitant may compete in the reduction in force or may be separated prior to the reduction in force.

Most installations terminate them rather than providing reemployed annuitants with reduction in force retention rights.

(k) EXCEPTIONS TO THE REGULAR ORDER OF RELEASE

A released employee has the right to use annual leave in order to remain on the agency's rolls past the effective date of the reduction in force in order to obtain first eligibility for retirement, and/or to gain eligibility to carry health benefits into retirement.

An employee in a relocation situation (e.g., transfer of function, reassignment, realignment, change of duty station, etc.) has the same right to use annual leave past the

effective date of separation by adverse action in order to obtain first eligibility for retirement, and/or to gain eligibility to carry health benefits into retirement.

(m) EMPLOYEES ON WORKMAN COMPENSATION IN RIF

An injured employee who is on LWOP because of a compensable injury enjoys no special protection in a reduction in force. If the employee is separated by reduction in force procedures while on LWOP the individual has no restoration rights.

You may not deny a reduction in force assignment right to an employee who is reached for release from a competitive level during a leave of absence (LWOP) that resulted from a compensable injury solely because the employee is physically disqualified as a result of the compensable injury. The employee must be treated as if the injury had not occurred.

(n) RIF NOTICES

An employee impacted by reduction in force is given at least 60-calendar days specific advance notice of the action that is proposed. There is **no longer** any regulatory requirement to give 120 days notice for a significant reduction in force (one that involves 50 or more separations), however many union contracts require a notice period longer than 60 days. There is no maximum timeframe for notice periods.

The notice period begins the **day after** the employee receives the reduction in force notice. The day the employee receives the notice, or the effective date of the reduction in force action, does not count in the computation of the minimum (60 days) notice period.

You also cannot count a Saturday, Sunday or legal holiday as the last day of the minimum notice period,

(o) PLACEMENT ON POSITIONS WITH HIGHER GROWTH POTENTIAL

You may assign an employee under formal reduction in force procedures (i.e., the employee is released from a competitive level) to a position with higher promotion potential. If this occurs (in formal RIF) after assignment the employee may be non-competitively promoted to the full performance level of the position. There is also no need to clear the PPP stopper list to process this promotion action since it is a career promotion.

In the Air Force, employees will not be assigned to a position with higher promotion potential when another affected employee with higher retention standing is eligible for assignment to the position at the target level.

A placement action outside of a formal reduction in force assignment right (e.g., Pre-RIF, or in lieu of RIF separation), or through modification of qualifications, to a position with greater growth potential must be made competitively in accordance with internal merit promotion procedures.